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Aunt Sarah & the War
A Tale of Transformations

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Aunt Sarah & the War

A Tale of Transformations

[Wilfrid Meynell]



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I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE TALE
TO HER OF WHOSE WORDS
AND WAYS ANYTHING WORTH
WHILE IN IT IS BUT AN ECHO.

Aunt Sarah & the War:

A Tale of Transformations

CHAPTER I

A set-back for Aunt Sarah—Henry bids goodbye to Grosvenor Square and eludes the lure of the waste-paper basket—An omen and a nomen—Thompson in the Trenches—Of Aunt Harryette, who hears everything—Aunt Sarah *versus* Mrs. Wharton—The Body of Woman—A Belinda Bulletin.

FROM AUNT SARAH (MRS. NELDON-WELDON)
TO HER NEPHEW, CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR, AT
THE FRONT.

60, Grosvenor Square, W.,

August, 1914.

My dear Nephew,

A great trouble has come on me, and I feel I must tell it out to someone, and that's you, knowing of old your always *sympathetic* ear. Gay as I daresay you are at that monstrous picnic of yours, what I have to tell you will come as something of a shock.

Yesterday afternoon, when Henry came to clear away the tea-things (you remember the 2nd footman with the slight squint?) he seemed very nervous and jumpy, and spilt

Belinda's milk on the rug that was the apple of your poor uncle's eye.

Well, I noticed Henry's clumsiness, and was telling him how inconsiderate he was, when he turned and said that he had decided to go for a soldier, and therefore respectfully tendered his notice! Of course, I promptly declined to accept it. For I own to you, my dear nephew, that he *understands Belinda* better than any of the rest.

Well, Henry spoke in a husky voice, and this, together with his awkward gait, and the way the tea-things jiggled on the tray as if his hands were unsteady, made me wonder if he had been *drinking*. I hear the teetotallers often do. And Henry, who is a Papist, belongs to the League of the Cross, founded by Cardinal Manning, who was your dear father's second cousin connected by the Carrington people, but nothing to boast of, say I, who don't approve of perverts and would not allow Henry to give up work, which he does well, to kill his fellow-creatures, for that's a great perversion too.

Next day Henry had *disappeared*. I rang and rang, and then Elise came up and broke to me in very broken English that Henry, who had, it seems, a weakness for her, left her a note

simply saying he was sorry to annoy his kind mistress (me!!) but his country called to him and he had enlisted.

I summoned all the household and asked each one to tell me in what smallest particular I had failed to make them comfortable. Of course nobody had any complaint—there was no possible ground for Henry's ingratitude. You went into the servants' quarters when you were last here, didn't you? Since then I have added comforts—a *waste-paper basket in every room!* When he returns from the War, what will he do?—not darken these doors again—that is all I *prophesy*.

Do not be too upset about it all. Be sure I bear up as best I can. So I reserve all other news for another letter. I wish this to be entirely *to the point*.

Your loving,

AUNT SARAH.

FROM CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR, AT THE FRONT,
TO HIS AUNT SARAH IN LONDON.

My afflicted Aunt,

Of course I'm very sorry you're disappointed and head-achey about Henry. But I must say I think he's a brick.

It's just fine of him not to have been spoiled by the finnicky fed-up atmosphere of dear, greasy old Grosvenor Square. Well, he *is* "fed up" with it in one sense, I reckon, and no blame to him either ! We want that sort badly. We want all sorts, and we want them now, nobody dare say how much. I suppose the Censor knows his business, but it seems a bit hard that English soldiers here are to suffer what English civilians at home may not even read.

But at last the Allies are really linking up; and, if it pleased my weak mind when the Paris papers said that Field-Marshal French came to them "with his predestined name," imagine my joy in the syllabic (and surely symbolic) amalgamation of the very names of the twain Commanders:

JOF FRE
FRE NCH

You see you read the names double, either across or down. If I mayn't believe in *an omen*, I do believe in *a nomen*, and I should like to find the fellow who first found that coincidence, and thank him for the funny comfort he's given one rather superstitious beggar. And to think of making anything jolly and lucky out of a name like Joffre!

A good sort he is, too, silent and reserved like our own Chief. They get on all the better, perhaps, because they don't speak each other's languages. It's a fine study to watch their faces when they're together and their conversation is being interpreted.

By the way, if Henry couldn't bear to part with his waste-paper basket, he perhaps took it with him? (Police!) It might make a useful sun-bonnet for a gee out here, where it's still hot as hot.

There's a whistle. Goodbye.

Your affectionate nephew,

OWEN T.

P.S.—What's all that about perverts, and how does it fit on to Peter and Paul and Stephen and John?—Ask the Chief Rabbi that.

FROM AUNT SARAH TO CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR,
AT THE FRONT.

60, Grosvenor Square, W.

27th August, 1914.

My dear Owen,

I find it horribly hard to replace Henry. I have had an awful fool of a failure, but I won't weary you with the details more than to tell you, as you're interested in our social system, that it's just all about *collapsing*. Men everywhere *inconsiderately* leave service to go soldiering. But brooding in the trenches over my disasters must not upset you.

Your Aunt Harryette reports that at Hampton Court nearly everybody is thinking about the war, and saying it should be *quickly ended*. She asks why the German Fleet isn't already at the bottom of the German Ocean? Aunt Harryette (always *shrewd*) says she has no doubt that Henry left his duty lured by the prospect of a beer-garden in Berlin. Elise thinks that the War will be over before Henry is through his training, and then a prodigal son for me, she says, "even if his calves are fatted, as it says somewhere in the Bible, which would require new gaiters!"

I bear no malice, hard hit as I am, but I'm sure Sir Edward Grey never would have allowed this abominable war if he had known what miseries he was inflicting on English *homes*. His grandmother and mine, I think I've told you, were married on the same morning, and if I have time I intend to tell him all about Henry.

Aunt H. has just heard *on the best authority* that a hundred thousand Russians have gone through England to the Front. If you see them you can tell them about Henry (without mentioning names) as a specimen case of hardship here at home, and hurry them up. I am sure Belinda has slept less well since Henry went. For myself, I am feeling fairly fit. In fact, I find the War a tonic. "O, a Teutonic you must mean," said your apparently displeased cousin Pauline, yesterday afternoon.

Your devoted,

AUNT SARAH.

FROM CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR, AT THE FRONT,
TO HIS AUNT SARAH.

In the Trenches,

September, 1914.

My dear Aunt,

This is scrawled in a lull between the bursting of the bombs—third day and night without a wink. I bet that beats Belinda's record. But I'm not saying mew-mew! Those Russians have taken a much longer time than your letter (received a fortnight ago) to get here, and they haven't got yet.

A Catholic pal of mine tells me that they always pray in their churches to the Archangel Michael to preserve them from bad things, and if these Russians really have been spirited here in no time from Archangel he says he'll know the prayer he was always rather vague about has been answered and answered and answered again. Good old Archangel, whence cometh our help to-morrow—we'll hope. And by George (and the Dragon) we need all the help they can give us. What a row we generally live in! I can still hear it in the quiet—the music of the *mitrailleuses*, or the howitzer striking a thousand hammers all on your very ear. I confess to you, my dear Aunt, it's rather

terrifying for the first ten minutes, but then you get strangely indifferent, and watch with curiosity, and even an awed kind of admiration, the live beauty of the lighted shells.

Thank Lady Ripon and the rest for the wonderful woollen things. I've appropriated a pair of the socks to myself, but am sad to trample under foot the work of a woman's hands! It seems so ungracious; so let me add what dear Aubrey de Vere once told me he had said to Mrs. Wordsworth when she similarly socked him: "If I keep my feet from evil ways, that will best show my gratitude for the honour done them." And so say we all.

I wish, my *dear* Aunt, you'd look up the Francis Thompson volumes I gave you last Christmas, and copy out for me the lines, in his Ode in praise of Pain, about the flame of firing cannon being a poppy-flower which sends men to their sleep of death. He knew all about opium, you remember. I do miss my books more than I can say. O, damn this War!

Forgive me all expletives—after listening to the stuff the howitzers belch forth, with few intervals fifty hours on end, I can never

again mind anything any human mouth can
bellow out. Bombs and such like are the only
Billingsgate.

Your unslept but very wide awake

OWEN.

FROM HIS AUNT SARAH TO CAPTAIN TUDOR,
AT THE FRONT.

60, Grosvenor Square, W.

Friday.

My dear Nephew,

I suppose these are the Thompson lines you wanted me to ferret out :

*Through shining acres of the musket-spears—
Where flame and wither with swift intercease
Flowers of red sleep that not the cornfield bears—*

I have wasted all the morning in finding them, and had to get Pauline's help in the end. And they're not much when they are found, to my fancy. I don't understand a word of them. Even Pauline was surprised. "Thompson in the Trenches!" she exclaimed, and laughed out—whether at the constancy of your literary loves or at the incongruity of Thompson and me, my dear, I couldn't tell. Anyway, I liked her laugh—the first I've heard from her since you left.

By the way, as we're literary-lounging, I met Edith Wharton again the other day, whose short stories you used to try to make me admire, and I willing enough, my dear, till I came on a sentence saying that the body of a modern woman is a battle-field between

her corset-maker and her cook—rather too personal I thought just after she had dined with me who have my own fatigues with my figure. What an unæsthetic picture, too—not an exhaustive one of any American woman I ever knew, and, if true of any of our own worldly women in the past, now, thank God, no longer !

Well, as Mrs. Wharton is a woman of the world and goes everywhere, I said to her about her newest book : “ How do you find time to write stories ? I never do.” She seemed to be going to say something, and then she stopped. It’s the old tale—people who write *can’t talk* ; and that’s a fair division. Nearly the only thing I know about Voltaire is that he said something very like this in his own day ; a reflection of mine that makes one more link for the Allies ! Thank Heaven I never printed a line myself. But you’ll find, when you come home again, that I’ve made a note of about a hundred things I want to say, my memory is so treacherous ever since Mr. McKenna (I suppose) allowed the motor-buses to go squacketing through the Square.

Your Aunt Harryette, who hears *everything*, writes that a *very illustrious personage* has been thrown into the Tower. How Tudor

it all sounds, dear Owen Tudor ! But spies are everywhere, Aunt H. says ; and Lord K. has *insisted* that the A——s should dismiss their old German governess who went on living with them. My maid Elise's queerness, and her evident sympathy with Henry, when I lament his downfall, make me sometimes suspect, Parisian as she is, she may be in the Kaiser's pay. I hear she has an illustrated paper by her bed containing the *Crown Prince's* portrait ! I shall need all my poor old eyes and ears.

There is something not very straightforward about her doings with Henry. She constantly asks if *I* have heard of him ! and if *she* will hear if he's killed. She rambles on, that she would have married him but for that squint in his left eye I always rather liked, but her aunt married a man with a squint who nearly murdered her, and that surely was the evil eye ! Elise told him this the day he ran away. " O damn my eye, if that's it," he said quite roughly to her as he went. I fancy French women must miss *manners* in English men of their own class. Feeling very uneasy about spies, I proposed to send her back to Paris, but she cried and said she must stay where she could hear the last of Henry.

Belinda has quite a distemper ; but the
Vet. sees her twice a day and is *very* hopeful.

Your distracted but devoted,

AUNT SARAH.

CHAPTER II

"The Breadth of death and life"—Captain Tudor's final refusal to bewail Belinda—He feels it is a long, long way to Grosvenor Square—The baby language of big people—Florence Nightingale, Queen Victoria and the unwomanly woman—The beginning of the end of the old Aunt Sarah—The Boy who went to death and *Her*—A Soldier's button-hole—Some reflections before a shattered Crucifix.

FROM CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR AT THE FRONT
TO HIS AUNT SARAH IN LONDON.

My dear Aunt,

You have so many worries of your own that I won't be so downright selfish as to tell you much more about ours out here. I see your theatres are open, your shops are thronged, and your footballers attracting the usual crowds. And I read, in larger type than is given to the men here making the long, long journey, that Lord and Lady Nobody or Other have left London for Bury St. Edmunds—let them bury themselves there and never come back and bother us again with their divagations!

Bury St. Edmunds sounds right enough though. Bury anybody without burying yourself, and you're lucky. Saints, too, I call the

fellows here, and we bury them by the hundred in the darkness of the night, for, if in the daytime, the graves would have to be dug deeper to take us gravediggers in too. Well, sometimes we envy the fellows who lie there.

But I won't waste words, and I won't ask after Belinda because I simply can't and keep what's left of my equilibrium. That vet. of hers could save scores of horses that I shoot here just to put them out of their pain. And the human wounded left untended for hours! Heaven, that within a hundred odd miles or so, just a brief bird's-flight, there should be thoughts and feelings and experiences "a whole God's breadth apart"—"the breadth of death and life."

Are we really the same race? Am I your sister's son? Conundrums from

Your affectionate

OWEN.

FROM MISS PAULINE VANDELEUR TO HER
COUSIN, CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR, AT THE FRONT.

60, Grosvenor Square, W.

Sunday.

Dear and dauntless Defender,

What inconsequence it is to call you anything ! I'm so tired of terms and names, for the ordinary standards of life and death before the War have been emptied of their meaning. The newspaper correspondents are having a nasty time of it, I know, absurdly treated like spies and eavesdroppers by some of our own people, just as the home papers are treated by K. of K., who, of course, in India had his own way with the Press, and (Uncle Philip says) can't get out of the bad habit here.

But bother criticism, when everybody is really doing his best so splendidly ; and K. of K., above all, who (*they* say !) when asked to join the Government, hesitated and said : " I'd rather marry Miss —— "—his unforgotten critic (I know and admire her) at the time of the Boer War. I like K. of K. to be sufficiently sensitive to remember what a woman like that, right or wrong, thought of him. All the same—and I'm criticising again—I wish the correspondents wouldn't have two separate vocabularies

for one and the same valour. O, Valour's too fine a thing to be sort of shop-windowed like that, an English brand and a German ! Why do they call everything our men do " gallant," as of course we know it is without being perpetually told, and then call the same quality in the Germans " desperate " or " fool-hardy " or " despairing." The foe follow up the fall of Antwerp with " feverish haste " : we elsewhere, under answering conditions, deliver our blow deftly while the iron is hot. *We* don't let the grass grow under our heels ! They lose an old ship and it is head-lined " Great British Naval Victory," and a " Lost Leviathan of the Deep " ; and we lose three old ships and pretend it was not worth anyone's trouble to sink them—they've wasted their ammunition ! And, of course, we " retire " where they " retreat." Don't you think the nations are still a bit in their babyhood ? The bother is we English have had such a comfy cradle, and been so easily rocked to sleep in it !

But know it's from my heart I call you my dear defender—and against more than merely physical ills—and I feel you to be so in every fibre of me.

I hope every German soldier has his *nice* cousin too, to call him hers. And I'm glad he

thinks he's right, as we think we're right, even if we know he's deceived. His clean conscience makes the War as sacred to him as it is to us. You remember somebody says that the tragedy of a conflict is that it's not between right and wrong, but between one right and another, or, at any rate, what the fighters think so. Wasn't it Goethe? I like it to be the sentiment of a German, for his countrymen will take it, in that case, the more easily into their very-much-of-a-pattern heads; and then, in Heaven's time, all will be known to both sides about their good faith, and a lot will be forgiven.

But I really want to write to you about Aunt Sarah. It's a pity that Hawthorne's not alive to observe her in her own "Transformation." She really is a psychological study worthy of his steel (pen). When I first told her that I had to give up eight hours a day to my Red Cross studies, she said she supposed she was very Early Victorian, but she did not think that nursing was a very nice or even proper profession for girls. She was glad that poor dear Queen Victoria was not alive to see what women had become—partly perhaps by her injudicious patting on the back of Florence Nightingale, who ended, she says, by hating women, and spitting at them all sorts of spiteful

names. She said she found people fearfully selfish, "girls and footmen"—a not very flattering conjunction for poor me! And she supposed I imagined I should look picturesque carrying a Lamp! Bother that Lady of the Lamp alliteration that has led to such a lot of little sillinesses! I kept my temper, let me tell you, sir; and kept on keeping it even all through the talk about "unwomanliness"—the talk of it in this land of millions of women at their "womanly" work in factories. I'll name no wretcheder others—I'm not supposed to be aware of them, you know.

Well, I've had my reward. After a week's marked silence, to snub me, I had a most amiable talk with Auntie who gave me a birthday tip of £100! And more, she said that she couldn't, on second thoughts, oppose what my conscience approved, though she hoped I'd look into it every night. Just as if it were the large cupboard in her bedroom, out of which her maid hauls all her dresses before Aunt Sarah composes herself to sleep, lest a German spy should be in profitable hiding. She thinks the Kaiser must know by now what important things Aunt Harryette hears and reports about the War, and she has written two crossed sheets to poor Mr. McKenna to implore that

policemen in plain clothes be placed all around No. 60.

Hum ! I've written you a very nasty letter, haven't I ?—and all without meaning it. You used to call me " goldfish " when we swam together last year on the divine Lido, and I thought it so much kinder than the usual " Red-head." But now I seem transformed (like Auntie), but in a bad way, and am only your (hungry for news of you)

CARP.

FROM CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR, AT THE FRONT,
TO MISS PAULINE VANDELEUR IN LONDON.

Dearest Cousin,

Forgive me if I write a little wildly, but you would not wonder if you were here. For instance, the boy next me went mad yesterday under the strain of it all, and jumped up out of the trench before I could stop him and walked straight towards the German lines. "I'm going to see her," he shouted to me above the din as he leapt forth, laughing quite a joyful laugh with his "Bye-bye." Then he ran a few yards—then stopped—and leant forward, reaching out his arms as if to clasp someone—and shivered and fell—shot through the heart.

I wish I could find that *Her* and tell her, but no, I don't. It might break her heart, or, much worse, she might not care. Perhaps at that moment she was playing bridge or getting her newer season hats. It used to please me when I was among the ostriches on the veldt (in the Boer war we once mistook a distant row of them for kilted Highlanders !) to wonder how it happened that the bird which hid its own head in the sand should make *your* head so conspicuous. But now we are up against less fanciful

paradoxes than that. O thanks for finding the Thompson lines. Auntie, in copying, left out the beginning and the ending, and I daresay it needs a soldier, and a soldier in action, to understand and be comforted by the image of the cannon-flame as a poppy, dispensing that last opiate. In the great strain I sometimes seem to want to claim one of those poppies—for my button-hole.

I must tell you I came on a sight yesterday that upset me as I thought nothing could ever upset me again. I went into a village chantry and was faced by a large crucifix that hung on a wall, with the Figure all mangled by a shell. The Arms, forced forward, seemed to be held out beseechingly; but the Face of the Man of Sorrows was expunged. An epitome of the whole war! If we don't restore that Figure in the world, and not merely in plaster, but in the flesh of man whose daily grief it has glorified, these lives will have been lost—that's the word.

Dearest, your devoted

O.

CHAPTER III

The cannon and the cobwebs—A soldier's word for it!—The Futurists' futility—The Pauline Epistles—May they rest in peace!—The Highland Nun of Ghent and the Gordons—Modern Miriams—Hannibal in a high-hat—The capture of Gilbert K. Chesterton—"Words, words, words"—Russia's concurrent Renunciations—Our laggard land: Votes *versus* Vodka—The Happy Warrior's Wound.

FROM CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR, AT THE FRONT,
TO MISS PAULINE VANDELEUR IN LONDON.

————— ———— France,
2nd November, 1914.

Far-away Pauline,

There's been some very ugly work to-day, and there'll be plenty more to-morrow. What's all this going to mean for us out here, and for dear old England? Of course at home a lot of cobwebs will be swept away. *A propos*, O do tell me if any of the Futurists and the Poster Impressionists, who've been writing up war as the only good thing left in the world, have themselves exchanged the paint-pot for the sword. They profess to admire ugliness, so

should khaki (in which men look so surprisingly well, all the same) be their wear !

And, I say, if old Carson's still telling people in the North that force is the remedy for fixing up untoward human affairs, send him out here *for ten minutes*. And that's a soldier's word to a civilian (and a lawyer at that !). Let Thomas Hardy and let Lewis Hind add that to their lists of Life's little daily ironical things.

And if anybody talks to you about the War in his everyday tone, say " Nuff sed ! " This War isn't *one* of the events of the world—it's the only event. The people who're *worthy* to talk about it are only they who've somehow suffered in or by or with it. Let no small issues dust over any least little bit of the only vital one—that this is a war on war. Surely the Pacifists must know it's a war which, if we win it, means an England free for ever of the conscript, perhaps every country in Europe free of him. It isn't we who condemn young men to shoot their fellows, willy-nilly, though the Germans, who've forced the pace of militarism in Europe all these years, have nearly driven even us to it—nearly but not yet. I've seen our casualties here, O God ! But casual criticism of this War by the stay-at-home—that's

the greatest casualty of all. If any man can't feel with his country now, let him at least be a silent witness of her agony. He's in all Europe's death-chamber—tread softly, speak in a whisper! Perhaps Nero played like a master, and made music that compensated somebody for the crackling. But Hush! to the discords of those who say fiddling things now, while more than Rome's burning.

And I'll tell you (only you) a secret, and please pay me back in kind! I find no longer any comfort in the little Shakspeare sonnet book you gave me at parting. I find that I suddenly can't read out here the greatest love-poetry in the world. It doesn't seem the real thing when read with the guns for chorus (even when they're silent, one goes on hearing them). It's too exotic for the trenches.

In fact, I can only wile away the weary lulls between the fighting, and the long dark hours (sometimes with one candle for six pairs of eyes to see by) by wearing out pencils in these long Pauline Epistles. I tried ink last night, but blood had got into it, so I gave it up. It was other fellows' blood, or else I should have tried to be as brave as Constance Lytton. But all rubricated letters and all rubrics will be more real for me henceforth and for ever.

Now you owe me a very big, big secret in return for that double one.

Expectantly and affectionately your

OWEN.

P.S.—Those casualty lists in the papers look so bare. Why don't they put *Requiescant in Pace* at the top of the deaths, like the Romans? That's a prayer with a new meaning for those in this unsleeping fight—*Rest*, and in *Peace*!

French's last Despatch has been read and re-read out here. It's grand reading, and what a feat to write it at all with all he's got on his mind. Do you remember that once at Oxford when a certain very old-maidish don was reading Wellington's Despatches and was asked what he thought of them, he replied, "They make one burn to be a Soldier"? Our General's Despatch will surely rekindle such a flame until it becomes a conflagration.

FROM MISS PAULINE VANDELEUR, IN LONDON,
TO CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR, AT THE FRONT.

60, Grosvenor Square, W.

Thursday.

My Dear One,

I have no secrets to betray, and don't you think it's just about as bad a betrayal when the secrets are our own as when they're those of our friends?

Still, for all that, on second thoughts, I'll tell you a little one. I've just been crying.

Don't be cross, for mine were rather happy tears, I think. This is what happened. Nina lent me her *Tablet* containing a letter from a Highland girl who is now a nun in Ghent. The Gordon Highlanders were hourly expected, she said; and then she hoped they would not come down the Convent's street, for, if they did, how could she help breaking the rule not to look out of the window?

Don't wonder if a fellow-woman wept. All the self-denial of the years of home-sickness, all the discipline of obedience, expressed in that speech! Emotion with self-sacrifice, the two together, that's what moves me. Most of us girls get our emotions so on the cheap. The big feeling reined by the little rule, that's what's

so touching about the Highland nun, and so humiliating for me. Would you be angry if I said it makes me feel rather like trying to be a nun? Do they take Protestants in Roman Catholic Convents?

Anyway, if you go to Ghent, as I hope you will, I want you to find out this unknown sister of mine, and say to her that if it doesn't smash all rules utterly you want to kiss her hand. You have your own nun's leave, Sir! And, more, if the Gordons did go down their street, and the Reverend Mother pushed the Highland nun's nose against the window-pane, as I pray she did, just give that reverend lady, rule or no rule, a salutation on the cheek!

I suppose tears are in the atmosphere. Anyway, I'm nearly as Autumnal as the weather itself. When I meet the recruitees on their marches about town, and see them manœuvring in the Park in a way that's so affecting just because it's so alien to these average citizens—I soften. I have to look into shop-windows while they pass, as if I thought of nothing but hats and hobble skirts and haricot beans; or I lean down to stroke, as if it were my life-mission, some passing pussy-cat. But now the cats seem to know me and to give me the cut. Poor aliens from Persia or Egypt or wherever

it was, they hate to be wet. We do not salute the recruits as they pass, we seemingly cold ones. But as they step by I say under my breath, "Bless them, bless them, bless them!"

This is a lugubrious letter for my Happy Warrior, but it's not really an unhappy one, as witnesses by her seal (a tear !) and signature your never-forgetting

PAULINE.

P.S.—Aunt Sarah said to me yesterday, as if rather aggrieved, that young people are so secretive now, she never can make out whether you and I are really engaged. I said, "My dear Aunt, you are very like ourselves in that particular." Then she said rather mysteriously that if there wasn't enough money, that was a difficulty that could be at once removed, and we could marry as soon as the War is over! I turned it off by saying that you could think of nothing now but your engagement—at Ypres.

FROM CAPTAIN TUDOR TO MISS PAULINE
VANDELEUR, IN LONDON.

Friday.

Dearest Coz.,

Thanks for the Katharine Tynan, whose "All in the April Evening" verses I've been humming to myself half this Red Friday; also for your (and my) dear Mrs. Parry Eden's lines from the *Westminster*. Bless Betsey and all her unknown little sisters—how they help! Also thanks for *Land and Water*, which everybody wants to see.

Bravo Belloc! Some of our fellows out here—and pretty high up, too—are really civilians at heart, and no shame to them. The noble "profession of arms" (mostly imagined in Piccadilly), *that's* theirs. But war, the bloody business, as Germans understand it, and shock us by practising it on us in all its ramifications and in its last logical sequels—they're not made for that. But Belloc's a layman with an amazing military mind—a Field-Marshal in mufti; and he's a grand conglomeration of the ancient and the modern—Hannibal in a high-hat!

Do you remember Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, in his list of the world's vanities in the " Esther " sonnets, includes the rejoicings of cities over the " barren wars that have laid waste their youth " ? Barren, indeed, most of them till now ; but it's that " barren " that must be deleted, or the blood of these dead boys will cry to heaven for vengeance on the politicians.

And suppose we *are* all selfish, if that's the word, in loving and rather jealously guarding our own, it's surely much better, as Chesterton said so well in a paper you sent me, to *keep* a Treaty for self-interest than for self-interest to *break* one. I hear that he and a lot of fellows who banned the Boer War have been reconciled to their own country (the joy of it !) by the issues in this last supreme conflict. So, in a little poem he's just written, which a friend sends me in manuscript, he calls the makers of this War *The Peace-Makers*, for they're that too—they've ended this Englishman's quarrel with England. So we've gained one great Englishman for England already in this war :—put that on your scroll of victories and be sure it's shown to Kaiser William !

STILL LATER (Dunkirk, between the sheets).

I want to tell you that if you were here you would feel that a woman who frivols has ceased to exist for anybody who's up against the stark facts of death and life. The standards of womanhood, as well as of manhood, are all to be changed by this War, and thank the Lord for that!

And so Aunt Sarah damns dear Florence Nightingale because she said spiteful things about women! She did, but the question is whether the ways of some women didn't righteously provoke her into angrily saying them? But here's the new woman where I now am, and the Duchess Millicent one of them. Lucky the men who have the love of women like that—the only really womanly women that breathe. When their beauty has burned itself away, the mere ashes shall remain man's sacred trust. By the way, I saw Dorothe Feilding the other day—what a dear, and what a deuce of a help she, too, has been—as brave as her brave brother. The “Body-snatcher” we name her, for she rescues men otherwise left for dead in the danger zone. If you see Lord Denbigh, thank him from me for being—her father.

Can you guess how I feel when I see in the

papers a picture-column advertisement of outlandish hat-shapes flanking the very letters describing—an army in its agony! It flaunted us, if you please, when we still had in vision the broken but unbandaged heads of glorious men, smashed all about us in a great assault on our line.

LATER.

I'm so glad to hear that Aunt Sarah is amiable to you, and I really don't need to say anything except this—that when I read that news in your letter about her goodness I felt quite an unwonted wave of affection go out to Grosvenor Square—and its “cottagey houses,”—as Lady Rosemary called them (to Aunt's indignation) from the bygone glories of Stafford House. She's now at Dunkirk with her mother, making full amends! Is Auntie really still moaning, I wonder, about the noise the plebeian motor-bus makes in passing through the Square's once sacrosanct precincts? Because you hear moans for such very different things here!

Lord, if they could listen to the unceasing shells that drive some men deaf, and some men blind, and some men dumb, and other men crazy—and these all of them MEN with a newly-earned meaning in the word! For there's a new meaning now in many an old word—we shall want a brand new Dictionary, and it's deuced

hard on good old Murray that just at the end of his great work he should need to begin it over again! Yes, those old-fashioned words, man and woman, have a new significance. And if you ever hear a pal of yours saying "awful" again about the weather, or her cousin's hats, or if you hear a man who's going to die comfy in his bed calling anything at all "terrible" or "dreadful," just say to him severely: "I beg your pardon?" Wasn't it St. Chrysostom who told his flock that whenever they heard a man talk blasphemy they might catch him a clout, and they did, and there was clean speaking in all that city? I suppose they couldn't box ears nowadays—ears, and long ears, are so sacred, except, of course, where bombs are about.

There's the difference! And who's to diagnose that difference to the satisfaction of the layman? It will need a new sort of observation to do it—and a new kind of politician made by a new kind of journalist, and a new kind of citizen with a new kind of wife and a new kind of son and daughter. Man was made out of the slime, and will be re-made out of it here. There's a Truth from the Trenches! And tell everyone who has influence that it's not inspiring to us soldiers to read of drunken men

and women at home, and Russia (a country with a soul) letting no vodka pass her lips. My laggard land! Politicians, who were willing to brave Germany, peter out before the publicans! Votes *versus* Vodka—that ignoble cry is not heard in Petrograd. Now you'll say I'm doing to my dear devoted cousin what Gladstone so offended *his* Sovereign by doing—treating her as a public meeting.

But you know I'm your very private

OWEN.

P.S.—By the way, I'm in Hospital, with a bit of shrapnel in me that ought to have taken my life, but, in this every way topsy-turvy world, has certainly saved it. You'll see my name among the wounded, so I just mention it to let you and Aunt Sarah and everybody know that I'm ripped (but ripping).

CHAPTER IV

The Kaiser's White Hair and the Kaiser's War—
The Victoria Cross—A very particular General and
his verses—The Knitting-needles of Grosvenor Square
—Khaki for plush—another Exodus from Aunt Sarah's
—A uniform dress (with differences) for the New
Woman—"I'll be Dimmered!"

FROM AUNT SARAH TO HER NIECE, MISS
PAULINE VANDELEUR, ON A VISIT TO HER
UNCLE PHILIP IN WALES.

60, Grosvenor Square, W.

Monday.

Dear Pauline,

I am very shocked by the awful news. It brings things badly home to me. My imagination did not run riot so far as to feel very much for *other people's* nephews. I have always minded *my own business*. You reproved me the other day (are you not a little stern, dear child, with your aged aunt ?) for repeating stories of a sort of sensational German atrocity which you say nobody ever verifies. Thinking it over, I should not at all approve of your spending, to convince me, my little birthday mite by making an offer of a £100 reward for any case of Belgian children with their hands cut off, or of Belgian soldiers with their wrists split open.

Anyhow, your well-informed Aunt Harryette hears that the Kaiser's hair has turned *white*, that the Crown Prince is dead and buried, and von Gluck dying of some horrible disease or other in a hospital, and indeed that *most* of the other German generals *have committed suicide*—a judgment on them, says she, for the way in which they spread false news among their poor deluded people.

Yes, I willingly subscribe to all those funds you are interested in. Only tell me in each case what sum you wish it to be. And you may put me down for a thousand mittens. I always fancied that old-time gear, and once knew a verse in which *mittens* rhymed with *kittens*. I suggest that a little tract by one of our clergymen should be *hidden* in each mitten, such a delightful surprise for any poor French or Belgian soldier who might have the luck to happen upon it.

I do hope, dear girl, that you're not out late on these nasty raw evenings. Girls are like pearls—they need warm air and sun, as Lord Beaconsfield once very wisely said to your Aunt Harryette. When I think of this saying I feel more and more what a statesman *he* was !

Your loving

AUNT SARAH.

FROM MISS PAULINE VANDELEUR, IN WALES,
TO HER AUNT SARAH IN LONDON.

MENAI,

17th Nov., 1914.

Dearest Aunt,

How good of you to give me a free hand with those figures. So I'm putting you down on five lists for a cool hundred apiece ! It will be as much as the people with German names are giving, but then that's a sort of social black-mail, isn't it ? which makes me feel as mean as mean can be when I see it ; and anyway, I know you wouldn't want the good old family name (it *is* a good old family name, isn't it ?) to be at the dregs-end of the list.

By the way, tell Aunt Harryette that I hope it's true that the Kaiser's hair *has* turned white. I see it put about as if it were a new crime in him, but I should never be able to respect him in any Future of Reconciliations, if such can still be, if he *hadn't* taken to heart (and hair) his responsibilities as the one man who could have stopped this War by a word, and who didn't stop it. And think of the chief of an army that has suffered as his has ! What a drain on his own life-blood, if he's not a mad fiend in the likeness of man.

Years ago in Cumberland he told his host that he was sleeping badly and had nightmares. It sounded like a whole stud of them, as that sporting host innocently remarked ! Well, I would die rather than endure his sleeping and waking horrors during his war—for that's what it will be called in History as it is called now in hearts—the Kaiser's War.

Again thanking you, dearest Aunt, for your most generous gifts,

I am your grateful

PAULINE.

FROM MISS PAULINE VANDELEUR, IN LONDON
AGAIN, TO CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR, V.C., IN
DUNKIRK.

60, Grosvenor Square, W.

O my dear One,

I think it was mean of you to leave us—to leave me—to learn from the papers how you won your wound and your Cross. I hope the friend you dug out of the ditch, with only the music of the shells to hearten you, has made his rescue worth while by a good recovery. Fancy Tony Capel!

His nice sister Fanny came to see me directly the papers reported it. She came, if you please, to thank *me*—crying like a baby, but no, not a bit like a baby really, for hers were tears of joy, and a baby's tears are never that. We must grow to be a little complicated, mustn't we, before we tap that double spring? Anyhow, she came to thank *me*, and I did so like her for it. So I send her gratitude to rightful *you*.

She brought that delightful girl, Joan, with her, who said what a difference the War had made in women's attitude towards men, how it showed up the serious side a man likes to hide but a woman likes to see, and how much nicer she would try to be to Captain Capel

when he returns, even if he is minus an arm. Nelson, she said in a rambling sort of way, had made it rather nice, in women's eyes, for a man to be armless. (It almost sounded, my dear, as if she was dropping an *h* !) Her family and the Hardys—Nelson's own " Kiss me, Hardy"—were somehow related, and she remembered how Nelson, after he lost his arm, and came home to Yarmouth, which gave him its freedom, had to take the oath ; and from under his cloak was putting out his left hand to hold the Testament, when the Bumble interposed and called for his *right* hand. " That, Sir, I left behind me at Teneriffe," said Nelson with a bow.

And the new heroism, the tales of which I read every day with breathless interest in the Letters sent to the papers from the Front, links up with the old, and, instead of discounting it, gives it a new directness and intimacy. It makes it ours. We used to dream of these heroes as bygones, begotten by a generation quite other than our own. But now I go into the library, and take down the fair records of their daring and hug them to my heart, and say what Newman said of his musty volumes of the Fathers after he became a Catholic : " You are mine now, you are mine now ! "

I'm sending you a magazine with Sir Ian Hamilton's elegy on Gordon, written at Khartoum more than a year ago. Most of the verses end with the name *Charles Gordon*; and that, you'll say, seems a burden no poem can properly bear. But you'll see that it can. The opening lines have been haunting me all day:

*Where the Blue Nile into the White Nile slips,
And the long-betrothed at last link hands.*

It's such a happy parable—perhaps too happy a one—of all human yearning. And I'm so proud we have a fine soldier who can write a poem like that. Have the Germans any parallel person? I never heard of one; and I imagine their all-absorbing-training as man-slayers must be the tomb of heart-remembered romance such as rings through all these lines. And it's nice to know that no German General of them all, very fine as I see some of them are, is anything like so good-looking! Are you frowning "How feminine"? Well, I pray God in every smallest feeling to keep me, as He so ingeniously fashioned me, a woman.

Aunt Sarah knits, knits, knits. She has tried stockings, but the Devonshire House women had to break it to her that the feet she makes

are more the feet of pussy-cats than of men. Such mites of feet! She was rather ruffled, and said on the spur of the moment that she understood that the Germans had cut off the feet of most of the Belgians, so why weren't hers just the wanted thing? After that she tried mittens, but made a little socket of wool round each finger. And that wasn't right either, for the fingers must not be divided—they keep warmer close together, like four babes in a bed. So now she does mufflers—of which our wonderful American friend, Mr. Whitemeadow, who is doing ambulance work in France, and crosses over to London every fortnight for fresh hospital supplies, assures us there can never be too many. So you'll have a big parcel shortly.

But marvels cease not, and the most amazing thing about Aunt Sarah has still to be told. She has persuaded three more of her men-servants to enlist, and has given Belinda (packed in one of the now superfluous waste-paper baskets) to Aunt Harryette for a birthday present. She says we are all in for sacrifices. How good for us if we are! Mind you say when you read this: "Aunt Sarah, hurrah!"

Your nicest cousin,

PAULINE.

P.S.—Everyone says my uniform is very becoming. Why don't all women, after this war, wear uniforms, with prescribed variations for the occasion, the contour, the colouring? Let the best artist design the series, and let it end for ever our wasteful and humiliating competition! Everyone says "Congratulate your cousin on his Cross."

FROM CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR, AT DUNKIRK, TO
MISS PAULINE VANDELEUR, IN LONDON.

The A.I. Hospital,
Dunkirk, November, 1914.

Dearest,

Just a word of thanks for your congratulations. There are crosses and crosses, the Iron Cross of the Kaiser, the Victoria that (by some fluke) is mine. But there's another and a greater, and those people at home have it who've lost husbands and fathers and sons. I think King Christ has conferred on them His own Cross—the supreme distinction.

And they have their Crown with their Cross—the crowning joy that their Belovèds are safe for ever beyond range of all life's casualties, crueller, a lot of them, than any that battle can inflict. So, when I hear that this man and that of my friends has fallen, I say to myself (perhaps a bit envyingly) those heavenly lines :

*The sunshine, dreaming upon Salmon's height,
Is not more sweet and white
Than the most heretofore sin-spotted soul
That darts to its delight
Straight from the absolution of a faithful fight.*

I quote from memory, but you know your Coventry Patmore well enough to be able to go to the source.

I'm nothing to that daring e'er-do-well, Dimmer, who stuck to his guns after they and he himself had been pretty well pounded. All he said was: "I've a bullet buried in my face, and five holes in my shoulders, and a jolly mess they made of me. But now I'm washed, I'm all right." He was a little pale once though—when they told him he was to get the Cross for Valour. We should make a new swear-word instead of that eternal "Damme." "O Dimmer me," I say when the probing wakes up the wound. And yesterday, when something happened in the kitchen and the dinner was ruined, "What a jolly Dimmer!" I called out to the fellows, and the word seemed to get us an appetite.

It's a new sensation to be writing in ink again, and rather a grim one. I have to say to myself: "This ink is black, this ink is black, black, black." For it looks red to me, and seems to curdle and creep after I've fixed it on the sheet.

Yours,

OWEN.

CHAPTER V

A large cheque for one, and for another the loss of an eye: yet are both received as strokes of fortune—A Regenerated England, and a re-reading of *Beauchamp's Career*—The importance of being Joan—"The Noes have it"—Aunt Sarah and the ungentlemanliness of modern warfare—The acquittal of a great-great-great Grandpapa.

FROM CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR, AT DUNKIRK,
TO HIS AUNT SARAH IN LONDON.

My dear kind Aunt indeed,

I have your letter, and I marvel much at the kindness of it. Have you really placed that sum to my credit at Cox's? And pray why? I've done no more than my duty, as the hackneyed phrase runs—or crawls like any other hackney. Always and every day I've been just what I am now, and it is only circumstances that have changed.

We, at their age, were very much like these boys who have died in droves, gladly, gayly: so you may suppose, as you are kind, that *we* should have behaved as well had the chance come to us when *we* were young, and when, in fact, we seemed little else than loafers. I begin to think well of my own adolescence for the

first time. A war like this puts you on terms with many things—even your own past.

“Next week I go to Ruin,” is what your former footman, Henry, said to me of himself before I left the Base Hospital. He meant Rouen, where he’s bound for Hospital No. 3. He had an eye shot out at Ypres—a place he calls Wipers, and other men Whypress. Wonderful to relate, he says it’s a great comfort to have only one eye. “The eye that’s gone is the one *she* didn’t like the squint of,” he said ; but I could get no further enlightenment. I thought you rather liked that cast in his eye. “One eye may serve me better than two,” is just now the sum-total of Henry’s arithmetic of life. What a good fellow ! Not a sign of the old grovellings of Grosvenor Square ! All these fellows who’ve faced death with us here, and have just missed finding it, are equals of the best. And, dimmer me, if they don’t know it !

Dear, dear Aunt, what will you say if I’m permanently disabled for the Army, and take advantage of the little fortune you’ve given me to go into Parliament, and try to improve things a bit ? “Your country needs you ” has been the cry to all these men. They have bled for their country, and where, when you come to think of it, has their country bled for them ?

Given them hovels to live in, a lot of them filthy food, which was luckily short commons or it would have killed them off in long clothes, as it did kill *armies* of their brothers, and their sisters too, poor kids ! Well, their turn must now come. They need the country that needed them, and they must have a corner of it for their own. Their country must now give a little of its life for them.

Are you vexed ? No, not really. You see I've just been reading *Beauchamp's Career* over again. Golly, what a book—the very best !

From your really grateful and affectionate

OWEN TUDOR.

FROM CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR, IN DUNKIRK,
TO MISS PAULINE VANDELEUR IN LONDON

The A.I. Hospital,
November, 1914.

Dearest,

Home heroics about the man I roped in are in marked contrast to any sayings or doings here, I'll tell you that. When near our lines, I fell with him in my arms, and we were carried on stretchers by brave Tommies (who quite equally deserve the Victoria Cross), the shells falling in fours all about us.

That night in Hospital, where we lay, bed by bed, Capel simply said: "You saved my life and risked your own. I wonder if you did me a good turn?" I was a bit taken aback, you know. "O, thanks, old chap," I said, rather feeling out for him to say as much to me. Then he had such a look on him that I softened, and whispered (for we were as weak as babies): "Don't you value life?" He whispered back: "Well, it depends on whether a girl at home's going to care the least little bit."

If that's your delightful Joan, as of course it is, tell her she's got her chance to do and be the real thing—the chance of a life-time.

He's lost the shattered arm—and the (once nearly shattered) army. He'll have to hang about till he hangs himself, if that girl doesn't give him her own hand (and arm) to make up to him.

I tell you it's worse hell than a battle if that girl isn't sometimes thinking of him. Tell me, doesn't a woman feel her own value when she knows the value set on her by a man like that ? That's a big asset for her in itself. I like, as I lie idly here, to imagine Stevenson's perceiving Baroness von Rosen coming round to some of these fellows who suffer and smile, and to hear her saying to them what she said with so much less reason to Prince Otto : “ If all men were like you, it would be *worth while to be a woman.*”

During the second night he was very low, and he wandered, the attendants thought ; for he said, when he was told by the Surgeon to buck up, “ It all rests with her word—a *yes* or a *no*, and isn't *no* just a little easier to say ? ” Then he would make the two sounds, first one, then the other, and say at the end, with a ghost of a smile, “ I think *no* takes less effort of the lips.” And he repeated, in an official voice, as if he were Mr. Speaker himself, “ I think the Noes have it.” Heavens, Pauline, do you think

there is any girl alive who trifles with men at all like that ?

LATER. Capel's taken the right turn for the lane that leads to life, she, I suppose, being the sign-post, though so blurred a one. After I had read him a bit of your letter in which you spoke of having seen Joan, he seemed to be so glad on *your* account. " Your lucky cousin," he kept repeating, and whenever he has spoken of you since, it has been by that name. Do you girls really feel lucky to know each other ? Do you realise how important you all are, each one a queen who is going to confer life and death on some Antony Capel ?

I gather that Joan met a man last winter who asked her to marry him, but she said " no "—perhaps the sort of no that has a mark of interrogation at the tail of it. Antony broods on this, for he said to me all of a sudden, without any notice : " I know *he* was clever and I am not. I know he was charming and there is nothing attractive about me. But when he said ' I love you,' I wonder whether he seemed to feel it as I do now ? " I broke in quite chirpily : " Why, you're a poet. I didn't know you were a poet." " O," he said, " it's only a quotation." " From whom ? " " O, a French fellow in particular, but really a million men who've

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all said it for themselves over and over again." Then he added: "I hope they all wanted the girl to get the fellow who was fondest of her, even at their own cost." And he put the wasted fingers of his remaining hand lengthways across his flickering eyes.

You say that a war brings you nearer to the living; but I tell you, in this borderland between two worlds one gets wonderfully chummy with all the generations of the dead. I'm getting back to the Front in a fortnight or so. I'm on pretty friendly nodding terms with Death by now, and suppose it may soon be a case of shake-hands. So I'll tell you that the hand Death takes is a better and a cleaner hand for having held yours in the days that now seem ten thousand years ago—"older than any story written in any book."

Goodbye, good girl and kind cousin, and more than ever worth-while woman.

From your own

OWEN.

FROM MISS PAULINE VANDELEUR, IN LONDON,
TO CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR, AT DUNKIRK.

My dear One,

I'm sending you an *Observer* of to-day, November the 22nd. How grand is Garvin when he doffs the politician. Yet even politicians, since they have the big say in the social conditions of England, ought to be men like that. When the petty spites of this pitiful party system die of their own disgrace, we'll all discover and do what's real and needed for the true life and love of England. Then perhaps splendid men like G. will go into the House of Commons; and Charles Masterman, who gave the best years of his youth to personal service of the poor, be the only sort of politician always sure of his seat.

I'm sending you a *Daily Mirror*, too, with the article by "W. M.," but I'm told those aren't his real initials. He writes so sensibly on everything, even on this great and crying scandal of the convention of war—a convention that's against all our reason, our conscience, our feeling. Just a bad habit. People accept it, and even excuse it, because it has come down to us from our fathers. But with all the difference! It was

not a trial of mere machinery and money then, and life was hardly at stake. Why, Trafalgar lost us under six hundred men, and we've sacrificed four or five thousand sailors already, sent blindly to the bottom, mostly, with no opportunity for personal courage in encounter, and with no effect on the final fortunes of the war. And in the two years' fighting in the Crimea those who died in action or of wounds numbered under four thousand!

No, we and all nations—some more than others, and the German most of all—must shoulder our own responsibility for this satanic slaughter. Whatever else we put down to heredity, and of course there's a lot, I submit that in this matter we must altogether acquit great-and-greater-grandpapa. I've been looking at him questioningly these last days in half-a-dozen houses; and he seems to me to be everywhere glaring out of his armour with something like a grim frown upon the mechancial man-slaying methods of a degenerate posterity.

Aunt Sarah says she thinks that our particular *g g g g g* grandfather—I can't bother to count how many greats—who lies with his crusading legs crossed in Chichester Cathedral, would think this whole thing *ungentlemanly*.

I smiled inwardly. But after all, that lady

stumbles over queer prejudices on to truths. *Gentle* it isn't, anyway. But *manly*! Of course it's that. But do you not think that in the New Era that's dawning, in the post-War world on whose threshold we're kneeling, there may be a probing into the true inwardness of what's manly, with readjustments we should now think surprising?

But I know you're saying you're not going to answer conundrums. But do! I "paws for a reply," as the cat said to the dog. And I dare say I deserve a scratching.

Your devoted cousin,

PAULINE.

CHAPTER VI

The Laggard Latch-Key—Uncle Philip and the Letters from the Front—The new significance of Boys—The Sacrifice of the Son; "If God wearies you, tell Him that He wearies you"—The Beasts transfigured—Third-class to Menai—The Conversion of the Car—"I have no Sons"—The Living Victims.

FROM MISS PAULINE VANDELEUR, IN LONDON,
TO CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR, AT DUNKIRK.

60 Grosvenor Square, W.

After all, dear MAN (all cant and flirtation have flitted from that phrase now), I'm not pausing for a reply to my letter of yesterday, which, indeed, really needed none. The fact is, I've just come from a talk with Uncle Philip, and I want to tell you how much moved I am by it.

When I knocked, the door did not open with that almost uncanny instantaneousness that has been the pride of the generations of porters sitting in that leather-hooded chair in the hall both day and night.

I was wondering whether the great boast of the family that they'd never had a latchkey for Menai House was coming crash, as are so many, many other boasts, my dear. Then a *female*

servant opened the door—doom of England ! Treating me as a stranger, she thought “ his Lordship was unwell and not to be disturbed.” But Uncle Philip emerged from the library at this moment, and came up very quickly, kissing me particularly affectionately, and leaving (is it beastly of me to tell you ?) a damp spot on my cheek. Tears are rather upsetting in a man, even an old man like Uncle, whom you’ve never seen crying before. He apologized for the new “ hall arrangements ” that had hindered my progress—all but two of the men-servants (veterans) had gone to the War.

I asked him if he really wanted me, and he said I knew his great delight in life was to see me—to see any of his beloved girls. I got out of the compliment to our sex (but a real one from him, because you know he’s never quite happy unless he’s got a nice girl to be good to) by saying, “ O yes, boys bore you.” But I tell you he turned on me almost fiercely at that. “ O no,” he said, “ not now. Heroes ! ” and he went quickly to the window and looked out, and then, steadying himself, he told me he had had a visit earlier in the morning from his dearest and oldest friend, who has lost both his boys at the Front within a few days of one another, each dying in doing a voluntary deed of daring.

Those adorable boys, he said, who would come no more, but who would never be forgotten, and for whose sake, and for their own, all living boys would be more to him henceforth.

I was very near to weeping, but I turned it off by saying I should be quite jealous of the boys he knows. He knew enough and was kind enough not to notice that, and went on to say that he found his attitude towards life very changed all round. He had loathed our little wars, and thought there was just that amount of political greed in our aggressions to vitiate even the soldierly self-sacrifice in them; and this had made him always unhappy. But this War had obliterated all past records. This baptism of blood had regenerated our dear nation. The Kaiser, he said, was his great benefactor—he had reconciled him to his countrymen. “I now look on the man in the street and love him. He is of a family of heroes.” This wave of heroism, he says, must break finally on Berlin, not on the Berlin of Berliners, of citizens and their families, or even of soldiers, but on the Doctrine of Force, on life-taking as a logical business, for which this same Berlin is the blatant label. We are to unaffix that label. He quoted his old friend Sir William Butler’s saying that war is the greatest of all human ills,

and includes and induces every lesser evil. That is the gospel which, Uncle hopes, we are to preach in Berlin, and be sure it's the same gospel, he says, that our St. Boniface (I hope it *was* bonny, bless him !) taught to them. So they're only to learn the same old lesson over again.

He'd been reading Letters from the Front, collected for him from the daily papers by—Aunt Sarah ! He thought them splendid. “ It is the top of the fulness of life,” he kept repeating from the letter of an officer who had been three days and nights in the most advanced trenches, and not supported because the people behind thought that he and all his men were dead. Dead ? “ ‘ It is the top of the fulness of life ! ’ There's no epic that can beat that,” Uncle said, “ and these are fellows who don't know they can write. ‘ It is the top of the fulness of life ’ — nothing finnikin there, Paulie dear. That'll wake the sleeper, won't it ? It'll wake ‘ the Mentals ’ and ‘ the Regimentals ’ alike at my two old opposing clubs in Pall Mall. No sleep for nights, almost no food, your comrades stark beside you, the trenches red-running, but a great cause in hand, and the moment at Ypres on which all turns, and ‘ It is the top of the fulness of life. ’ ”

Like me, he can hardly bear to meet the recruits marching in the streets—the sight of them, or rather the thought of them, moves him so. But it's the parents who've given their boys that are his greatest grief. He can't speak of it without putting up the white flag, as he calls his poor pocket-hankey. But how useful, yes, useful, are tears when words become so weak you're ashamed to speak them. This is what he feels in talking to the fathers, and far more to the mothers, whose boys are of "the unreturning brave." I can't describe to you with what a new wonderful gravity the Uncle Philip who has done nothing but jest with us all our born days said: "God gave His only Son. And so have these fathers—aye, and these Mary-mothers too. God gave one Son,"—and now he spoke with a kind of awe that transfigured him—"God gave one Son, and some of these fathers have given two sons."

When I told Aunt Sarah of this sense of the sacredness that Christianity confers on human life, even in the very welter of the slaughter, she said it reminded her of what she once felt when, as a young girl, she was taken to luncheon with Cardinal Manning, who was some sort of a cousin, wasn't he? Heretic as she was, she felt rather frightened before she

found him more than friendly—fatherly. On that Sunday afternoon he went out on some business near by his big barrack-house by the Vauxhall Bridge Road, and took her with him. And they had not gone far before they met an artisan with a little boy, who saluted the benign old archbishop. He stopped to speak to the pausing man, who turned out to be a carpenter. And then, as they walked on, the Cardinal turned to Auntie and said, “Only think of it—a Carpenter and his Son, a Carpenter and his Son!”

I will tell you something else about Aunt Sarah and “Cousin Henry.” She had been rather bothered just then about religious things, and she told him so, and how many prayers she said every night and morning, and how they fagged her. The Cardinal said he had just been reading in the diary of “a dear German girl” an entry that moved him. It was this: “If God wearies you, tell Him that He wearies you.” So honest, I call it, not treating God on ceremony as if He were our next-door neighbour, but being quite candid with Him Who knows already, knows us in and out, and what we believe and what we only believe we believe. That “dear German girl!” and ah, those dear German girls of to-day, how my

heart bleeds for them, mourning their dead braves !

Well, then the old Cardinal said to young Aunt Sarah (have we ever realized she *was* once our age ?) that she must not be such a heathen as to expect to be heard for her "much speaking" ; and he advised her to say every night only " O Lord, my heart is ready, as the psalmist says." Aunt Sarah couldn't make out whether he meant her to say " as the psalmist says " as part of the prayer, so she got confused and soon gave up saying any of it. I have taken it over (*minus* the literary announcement, which must be pretty stale in Heaven by now) and I've said it every night lately. But my heart ! And ready for what ? Poor heart, how can it be sure what it is ready to receive from the unknown when it cannot be sure—be quite sure, what it is willing to receive from the known—from even the most beloved being on earth ?

Now and always, whatever betides, his

PAULINE.

FROM MISS PAULINE VANDELEUR, IN LONDON,
TO CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR, AT DUNKIRK.

Dearest,

I persuaded Uncle Philip to give me (and to let me send for your private eye) some lines he wrote for the parents of two boys who died in daring action. He said he could not speak to these bereaved ones, or even write in daily prose, so he tried his hand at some rhymes ; but even so he *couldn't* send them :

THE LIVING VICTIMS :

FATHERS AND MOTHERS OF THE FALLEN.

O piercèd hearts and emptied eyes,
I, seeing your great sacrifice,
I, who no younger part can play,
Just bless and thank you night and day.
Your faces, not the forms I meet,
Make the procession of the street ;
And in the anguished night I start,—
'Tis You who take me by the heart.

Be comforted and understand !
When God for man's Redemption planned,
And One must die, He chose the part
Far sharper to the Father's heart,
And gave His Son. O dearest You,

Take that high parable for true.
Ye gods and goddesses 'mong men
It shall be now as it was then :—
The earth be saved (O share my faith !)
By the blest Boys you gave to Death.

With even these words to your deaf heart
I eased my secondary smart ;
Then felt ashamed, as they who shout
When God's own silence is about,
And turned that I might hide my head—
Because there's nothing to be said.

When I was with Uncle Philip again yesterday that same female apparition came into the room with a little brown-paper parcel. "O, those are the latchkeys," said Uncle, quite unconcerned, as if they didn't unlock a domestic tragedy. And of course they don't the least bit by our new standards of life ! But when I opened the packet and he took up a key—a simple Yale—he handled it almost as if it were a weapon. "*How very German,*" he said, as he looked at it ; I suppose on account of its ingenuity—of the mere mechanism which displaces this long family tradition of personal ministrations.

Your truly affectionate cousin,

PAULINE.

FROM AUNT SARAH TO CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR,
AGAIN AT THE FRONT.

60, Grosvenor Square, W.

Friday, 11.30 p.m.

My dear Nephew,

Your Aunt Madeline has just left me. She came to say she is afraid Pauline found Uncle Philip in a rather poor way, and that her report may have made me anxious. But she says this War, though it's knocked him to bits in some ways, has pulled him together in others. I want you to hear this, in case Pauline has been writing to you in her usual *poetical* strain.

And, by the way, Aunt Madeline positively *smiled* when she told me of a new experience of hers and your Uncle's. You know how he always hated the long railway journeys to and from Wales ; he used to say it often made his body stay in town when his heart was in his beloved fields and woods at Menai. Travelling, with strangers in the carriage with him, seemed to get on his nerves. He often put luggage on the vacant seats, and, at every stopping-station, he used to say about the people on the platform, "I believe those *beasts* are going to break in." Well, he and Madeline yesterday went to the country crowded *third-class*.

I must say I always thought it a mistake for the Companies to stop at so *many* stations—people who want to get out at them are so selfish, keeping the other poor passengers packed in the train. It always seemed to me to be *impertinence*!—a word that's becoming sadly obsolete but not a thing! Well, the motor-car struck a blow at that sort of *waste of time*, and I must say I enjoyed mine most of all on just this very account. I'm speaking of the car now as a thing of the past, you see; because I've transformed it into an ambulance and sent it to *The Times*. Elise has now to stand on the steps and stop the motor-bus for your really *nimble* Aunt. It is quite a convenience to be thankful for, to have it passing the *very door*.

Your uncle Philip never minded being childless till now—he was always so pleased to think you would one day inherit. But your Aunt Madeline says that now he bemoans, “I have no sons to give to my England, I have nothing worth giving. I have no sons.”

We are expecting my excellent old servant Henry every minute, the *first of our wounded* to be received in this very house.

Your devoted

AUNT SARAH.

CHAPTER VII

"O Lord, my heart is ready!" Aunt Sarah's, Pauline's, and all England's heart—The Victorian dead, and the Georgian—The Transfiguration of Aunt Sarah—The house transformed into a Hospital—Henry's return to Grosvenor Square—"Thy Wounds were many, but Thou hadst no Child"—The uplifting of Literature as an item of England's resurrection—"I'm not married"—Pauline's Red Cross—Another Englishman's grave at Ypres—*R.I.P.*

FROM MISS PAULINE VANDELEUR IN LONDON
TO CAPTAIN TUDOR AGAIN AT THE FRONT.

60, Grosvenor Square, W.

Lord Mayor's Day.

My dear One,

I seem to have come on a clue to the meaning of that prayer "O Lord, my heart is ready!" Ready for this War, for all it involves, perhaps even for the sacrifice of all. I say it night and morning, and in the morning I feel I mean it, but it comes more falteringly at night.

And I get courage from — Aunt Sarah! She did not say the prayer long, you know. But her life is now just a transcript of that prayer fulfilled. And it must be the same with half England as it is with her. "O Lord, our hearts are ready," I say as I thread my way

through the crowded streets. And my England seems to say it with me. "O Lord, our hearts are ready"—our altered hearts!

I like to think the prayer had a part in Aunt Sarah's transformation, for it links up this War with the Cardinal and all those other mighty Victorian Dead of whom your beloved poet sang :

*They passed, they passed, but cannot pass away,
For England feels them in her blood like wine.*

Those Victorian dead, now so nobly reinforced by the Georgian! Surely the next generation of men and women will feel in its blood this heavenly intoxication. O pray our politicians see to it that there's no diseasing drunkenness, but only this divine inebriation, possible in our England by then!

As Aunt has turned No. 60 into a Hospital, I shall probably take my first professional duty here. And I shall be nursing proxies of you all the time, my Owen.

Your very

PAULINE.

FROM MISS PAULINE VANDELEUR, IN LONDON,
TO CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR, AT THE FRONT.

60, Grosvenor Square, W.

Sunday.

Owen, my Own,

Captain Capel, all smiles, has just looked in. He landed yesterday, and this was his first call, except one to his sister, with whom was Joan. What a sensation to talk to someone who, five days ago, talked with you. So you are in the front line again, and full of faith in the great issues of the fight! I bless you, my very own. I bless you now and always.

I luncheoned to-day at Brown's Hotel with some of my dear Americans. Rudyard Kipling was there, and I couldn't help looking at him longer than was quite polite and—loving him. "Who dies if England live?" has been my talisman these many days. And all his other splendid things so fill my mind that I can hardly remember those which you and I agreed in not liking. "Faults," said someone to a caviller over the memory of a dead, and perhaps vulnerable, hero, "He was so great a man I had forgotten he had any."

I daresay there will be a lot of changes, one way and another, in our literary bearings. Is

it a symptom that I put my Swinburnes on a very back shelf this morning ? And as one thing recedes into unreality, the reality of other things becomes newly apparent. When first I read Stephen Phillips's *Christ in Hades* volume, and came on the woman's words to Our Lord : " Thy wounds were many, but Thou hadst no Child," poignant as I felt them to be, I did not do much more than marvel at a man's insight. But now, I say the words as part of the vital history of England. Ten thousand son-bereaven mothers are saying that line to Christ to-day, and I all day for them, in tender reproach it may be, but more in wonderment, and in expectation that He will indeed respond.

Perhaps it won't be left altogether to readers to shift from their old moorings. Authors themselves will become allured to the new mood. Why, already Thomas Hardy has actually written a poem (I send it), in which Right seems to have the chance of an upper hand over Wrong ; and only the day before yesterday I heard Professor Gilbert Murray, when speaking very movingly about all these altering conditions of ours, say that a novelist of note, a friend of his (I thought perhaps Maurice Hewlett, who was in the room at the time), had told him he didn't know what sort of books

he would write in future, but he knew they would be quite different.

Nina, who was at the luncheon, had just come from hearing a preacher of renown—"the first sermon of his I have sat through without feeling a little sorry for myself," she said, and she wondered whether the change was in herself or in him. Aunt Sarah, who usen't to take to Nina (we're all tumbling over each other now with tolerances !) turned to her and said, in her kindest manner : " Well, my dear, if the War hasn't changed both of you, you're the only two who're untouched. It has changed even me," she added very low. Dear dear Aunt Sarah !

Again and again and again I bless you, my Beloved, and I don't know why, but my tears fall as if to fix and not obliterate my blessing.

Yours and all and only yours,

PAULINE.

Aunt liked your reading of the French-Joffre semi-anagram—who shall separate them ? But be consistent, and take a *Rowland* for your Oliver ! Antony Rowland Capel, A.R.C. for initials. So of course you'll say the finger of Fate points to Joan of ARC and a happy wedding. Don't frown—it's only tit for tat !

FROM CAPTAIN OWEN TUDOR AT THE FRONT
TO MISS PAULINE VANDELEUR IN LONDON.

Dearest,

To-morrow we make a further advance to try to clear the Ypres district of the enemy, and so may end the toughest Battle in all British or any other history.

But what's all this bother about Sir Roger Casement? I met him once for five minutes with Padraic Colum, and thought him another most capital fellow. Perhaps he can't stomach the Portuguese of Putumayo as our dear Allies, any more than you or I could care to recall Leopold in the Congo. But even grave issues like these, which you and I and every decent man and woman feel at heart, are lost in this war's all-absorbing one. And I don't like to hear the fellows here say that a clever Irishman mostly carries in his knapsack a kink, failing a Field-Marshal's baton. They've had their full share of that last implement all the same, and the men of Erin here, though their courage is complicated by their intimate hope and fear of a future life, are bravest of the brave. And how does anyone suppose that the Germans, given the occasion, wouldn't break all the pretty Casement windows? How could

Sir Roger grieve the holy spirit in all his gallant countrymen here, and in great Irishmen everywhere ? I'm wondering what Sir Charles Fitzpatrick, in Ottawa, for instance, who says so wisely little at any time, will say when he reads of this worsted-work in Berlin ? It's just the bother the right sort of Boer must be feeling about my old friend-enemy De Wet.

What you report about the changes in literary and all other things comes home. If England is regenerated, then these precious lives won't have been idly sacrificed, and that thought makes me indifferent to death. Because then it really is death for England.

Perhaps, among other cataclysms, we may even get the Very Gloomy the Dean to take heart of grace and to give a smile that will irradiate all clerical England. And, by the way, doesn't it move you to see, in the list of the Fallen, the sons of so many parsons ?—and all of them knowing that the boys in this surely last War are like themselves the servants of the Prince of Peace. In that Faith I live ; in that Faith, God willing, I die.

Goodbye, dearest you, from

OWEN.

Remember, dear, that Love outlasts death.

EXTRACT FROM "THE NEW ERA."

Mrs. Neldon-Weldon has fitted up her house in Grosvenor Square as a thoroughly well-equipped hospital for wounded officers and men. The nursing staff is to include her niece, Miss Pauline Vandeleur, and by a not unpleasant coincidence the first to arrive at No. 60, wounded from France, was Private Henry Thomas Dove, a former footman of the house, whom Mrs. Neldon-Weldon sent to serve his King and Country at the very outset of the War. A correspondent speaks of it as almost a public ceremony; for the generous mistress of the establishment and all the servants, his former comrades, went out to welcome the wounded hero, who was carried up the steps into the hall between two applauding lines as if he were its returning master.

Mrs. Neldon-Weldon, who is to devote herself to the service of the wounded and to the amusement of the convalescent, is in mourning for her nephew, Captain Owen Tudor, V.C., who, after being earlier wounded in circumstances that are now familiar, finally lost his life in a later stage of the stubborn fighting at Ypres. From recent reports it appears that a farm-house occupied by the enemy,

near to the advancing English line, had to be cleared, a task of the greatest danger, and indeed of all but certain death to the officer entrusted to carry it out. Captain Milne characteristically volunteered, and the General in command was about to accept the heroic offer when Captain Tudor said, "I'm your man, Sir—I'm not married." Then occurred what is probably a unique episode of an otherwise unprecedented War. The General shook Captain Tudor's hand in acceptance of the offer, and, before releasing, bowed over it. The enemy were successfully dislodged that day, but Captain Tudor, leading his men in the assault, was shot through the heart.

* * * *

REQUIESCAT IN PACE !

*I with uncovered head
Salute the sacred dead,
Who went, and who return not—say not so !*

*Virtue treads paths that end not in the grave ;
No ban of endless night exiles the brave ;*

*And to the saner mind
We rather seem the dead, that stayed behind.*

J. R. Lowell.

Appendix

I

The following poems, found among the papers of the late Captain Owen Tudor, V.C., are with the permission of their authors, here reproduced :

(See page 39)

THE ADMONITION : TO BETSEY,

*Remember, on your knees,
The men who guard your slumbers—*
And guard a house in a still street
Of drifting leaves and drifting feet,
A deep blue window where below
Lies moonlight on the roofs like snow,
A clock that still his quarters tells
To the dove that roosts beneath the bell's
Grave canopy of silent brass,
Round which the little night-winds pass
Yet stir it not in the grey steeple ;
And guard all small and drowsy people
Whom gentlest dusk doth disattire,
Undressing by the nursery fire
In unperturbèd numbers
On this side of the seas—

*Remember, on your knees,
The men who guard your slumbers,*

HELEN PARRY EDEN.

(See page 39)

SHEEP AND LAMBS

All in the April evening,
April airs were abroad ;
The sheep with their little lambs
Passed me by on the road.

The sheep with their little lambs
Passed me by on the road ;
All in the April evening
I thought on the Lamb of God.

The lambs were weary, and crying
With a weak, human cry.
I thought on the Lamb of God
Going meekly to die.

Up in the blue, blue mountains
Dewy pastures are sweet ;
Rest for the little bodies,
Rest for the little feet.

But for the Lamb of God
Up on the hilltop green
Only a cross of shame
Two stark crosses between.

All in the April evening,
April airs were abroad ;
I saw the sheep with their lambs,
And thought on the Lamb of God.

KATHARINE TYNAN.

See page 40)

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

Of old with a divided heart

I saw my people's pride expand,
Since a man's soul is torn apart
By mother earth and fatherland.

I knew, through many a tangled tale,
Glory and truth not one, but two ;
King, Constable and Amirail

Took me like trumpets : but I knew
A blacker thing than blood's own dye
Weighed down great Hawkins on the sea ;
And Nelson turned his blindest eye
On Naples and on liberty.

Therefore to you my thanks, O throne,
O thousand-fold and frozen folk,
For whose cold frenzies all your own
The Battle of the Rivers broke ;

Who have no faith a man could mourn,
Nor freedom any man desires ;
But in a new clean light of scorn
Close up my quarrel with my sires ;

Who bring my English heart to me,
Who mend me like a broken toy ;
Till I can see you fight and flee,
And laugh as if I were a boy.

G. K. CHESTERTON.

(See page 80)

SONG OF THE SOLDIERS-

What of the faith and fire within us
 Men who march away
 Ere the barn-cocks say
 Night is growing gray,
 To hazards whence no tears can win us ;
 What of the faith and fire within us
 Men who march away ?

Is it a purblind prank, O think you,
 Friend with the musing eye
 Who watch us stepping by,
 With doubt and dolorous sigh ?
 Can much pondering so hoodwink you !
 Is it a purblind prank, O think you,
 Friend with the musing eye ?

Nay. We see well what we are doing,
 Though some may not see—
 Dalliers as they be !—
 England's need are we ;

Her distress would set us rueing :

Nay. We see well what we are doing,
 Though some may not see !

In our heart of hearts believing
 Victory crowns the just,
 And that braggarts must
 Surely bite the dust,

March we to the field ungrieving,
 In our heart of hearts believing
 Victory crowns the just.

Hence the faith and fire within us
 Men who march away
 Ere the barn-cocks say
 Night is growing gray,
 To hazards whence no tears can win us ;
 Hence the faith and fire within us
 Men who march away.

THOMAS HARDY.

APPENDIX II

*Dispatch from Field-Marshal Sir John French,
 under date 20th November, 1914 (p. 35).*

“ I fully realized the difficult task which lay before us, and the onerous rôle which the British Army was called upon to fulfil. That success has been attained, and all the enemy's desperate attempts to break through our line frustrated, is due entirely to the marvellous fighting power and the indomitable courage

and tenacity of officers, non-commissioned officers, and men. No more arduous task has ever been assigned to British soldiers ; and in all their splendid history there is no instance of their having answered so magnificently to the desperate calls which of necessity were made upon them.

“ The courage, tenacity, endurance and cheerfulness of the men in such unparalleled circumstances are beyond all praise.

“ Words fail me to express the admiration I feel for their conduct, or my sense of the incalculable services they rendered. I venture to predict that their deeds during these days of stress and trial will furnish some of the most brilliant chapters which will be found in the military history of our time.”

The assurance of a Poet (p. 54) is sustained by a Theologian in the banned Pastoral of Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines ; Xmas, 1914.

“ If I am asked what I think of the eternal salvation of a brave man who has consciously given his life in defence of his country's honour, and in vindication of violated justice, I shall not hesitate to reply that without any doubt

whatever Christ crowns his military valour, and that death, accepted in this Christian spirit, assures the safety of that man's soul. 'Greater love than this hath no man,' said Our Saviour, 'that a man lay down his life for his friends.' And the soldier who dies to save his brothers, and to defend the hearths and altars of his country, reaches this highest of all degrees of charity. He may not have made a close analysis of the value of his sacrifice ; but must we suppose that God requires of the plain soldier in the excitement of battle the methodical precision of the moralist or the theologian ? Can we who revere his heroism doubt that his God welcomes him with love ? Christian mothers, be proud of your sons. Of all griefs, of all our human sorrows, yours is perhaps the most worthy of veneration. I think I behold you in your affliction, but erect, standing at the side of the Mother of Sorrows, at the foot of the Cross. Suffer us to offer you not only our condolence but our congratulation. Not all our heroes obtain temporal honours, but for all we expect the immortal crown of the elect. For this is the virtue of a single act of perfect charity : it cancels a whole lifetime of sins—it transforms a sinful man into a saint."

A GRAVE IN FLANDERS

BY THE MARQUESS OF CREWE

HERE in the marshland, past the battered bridge,
One of a hundred grains untimely sown,
Here, with his comrades of the hard-won ridge,
He rests, unknown.

His horoscope had seemed so plainly drawn :—
School triumphs, earned apace in work and play ;
Friendships at will ; then love's delightful dawn
And mellowing day ;

Home fostering hope ; some service to the State ;
Benignant age ; then the long tryst to keep
Where in the yew-tree shadow congregate
His fathers sleep.

Was here the one thing needful to distil
From life's alembic, through this holier fate
The man's essential soul, the hero will ?
We ask ; and wait.

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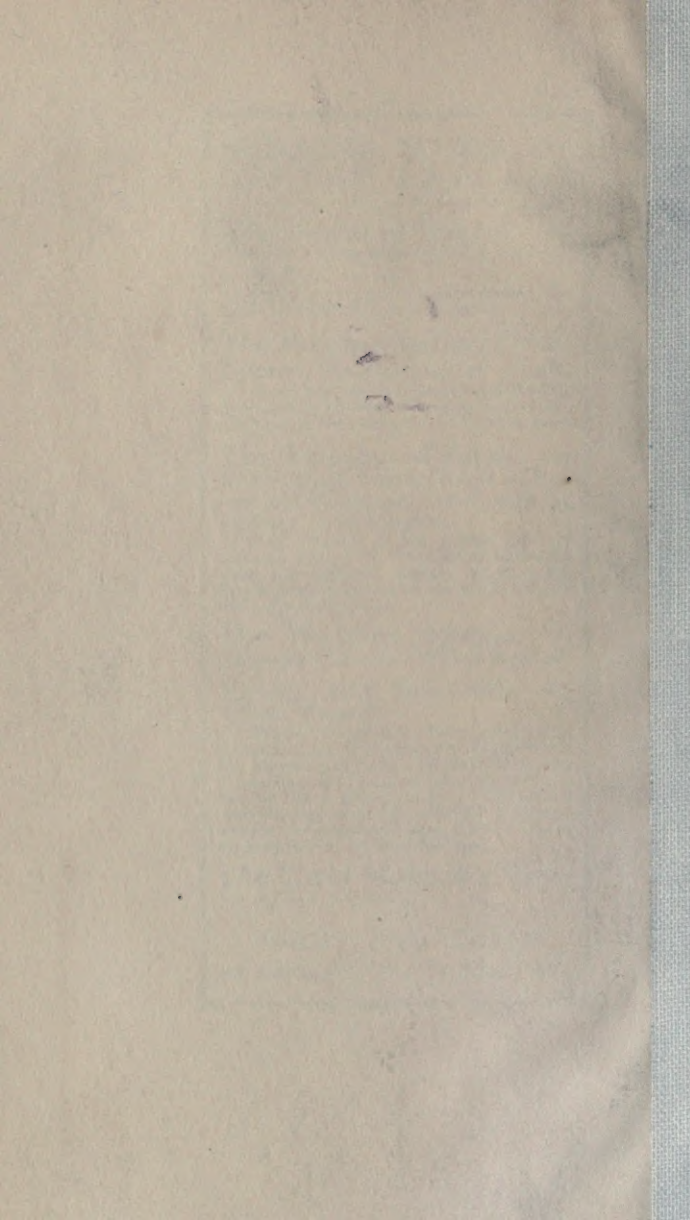
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The Carol of the Fir Tree. By Alfred Noyes.

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